

Message Text

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AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PEPR, PINT, US, LT
SUBJECT: LESOTHO CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION LEADER AIRS VIEWS

1. SUMMARY. B. M. KHAKETLA, LESOTHO CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION LEADER AND AUTHOR, DISCUSSED WITH PAO AMERICAN POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS, POSITION ON DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA, AMERICAN BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND HIS VIEWS OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER DISCUSSED SEVERAL ISSUES OF CURRENT RELEVANCE WITH BENNETT MAKOLO KHAKETLA DURING A VISIT ON FEBRUARY 13, 1978 TO INFORM HIM OF IMPENDING BROADCAST OF HIS INTERVIEW ON THE VOICE OF AMERICA PROGRAM "CONVERSATIONS WITH AFRICAN WRITERS".

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3. AFTER CASUAL REPORTEE DURING WHICH THE PAO PRESENTED A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN DURING THE VOA INTERVIEW AND FIFTEEN BOOKS, KHAKETLA WAS ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS A FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE. HE WAS NOT IMPRESSED AND ASKED HOW THE STRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS GOING TO DEMONSTRATE AMERICAN INTEREST IN AFRICA. HE ALSO ASKED WHAT THE UNITED STATES

WAS DOING TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS IN LESOTHO. THE PAO EXPLAINED THE REQUIREMENT OF CONGRESS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS TO BE PREPARED ON COUNTRIES RECEIVING AMERICAN AID, A DEVELOPMENT OF WHICH KHAKETLA WAS NOT AWARE.

4. THE TALK THEN MOVED, AT HIS DIRECTION, TO PREVIOUS AMERICAN ACTIONS IN AFRICA AND HOW THE UNITED STATES "HAD LET ANGOLA GO TO THE COMMUNISTS." HE WAS CRITICAL THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT HELPING SOMALIA WHICH HE FEARED MIGHT BE "TAKEN OVER BY RUSSIA," AND ASKED: "WOULD THE UNITED STATES LET THAT HAPPEN?" THE PAO POINTED OUT THAT, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE UNITED STATES HAD BEEN CRITICIZED LAST YEAR FOR NOT HELPING ETHIOPIA WHEN IT WAS BEING ATTACKED BY SOMALIA. THE PAO STRESSED THAT THE CARTER FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS A NEW FOREIGN POLICY THRUST FOR AMERICA AFTER THE U.S. HAD TRIED FOR YEARS TO SOLVE THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS, OFTEN WITHOUT SUCCESS OR GRATITUDE OR SUPPORT OF OTHER COUNTRIES, BY INJECTING OVERWHELMING RESOURCES. "NEVERTHELESS, "KHAKETLA OBSERVED, "THE WORLD DEPENDS ON THE UNITED STATES FOR LEADERSHIP."

5. ON SOUTH AFRICA, KHAKETLA WANTED AMERICA TO PUT MORE PRESSURE ON AMERICAN FIRMS OPERATING IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GET THEM TO "DISINVEST." SOUTH AFRICA'S POLICY OF CREATING HOMELANDS "WON'T WORK" AND HE CITED CRITICISM OF THAT POLICY BY HOMELAND LEADERS AS PROOF.

6. ON THE PROSPECT OF ELECTIONS BEING HELD AGAIN IN LESOTHO, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KHAKETLA DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD TAKE PLACE BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER KNEW HE WOULD NOT WIN. "HE WOULD ONLY WIN FIVE OR SIX DISTRICTS" OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS. FOLLOWING UP ON THAT POINT, THE PAO ASKED WHO HE THOUGHT WOULD BECOME PRIME MINISTER IF CHIEF JONATHAN WERE TO PASS FROM THE SCENE. WITHOUT HESITATION KHAKETLA REPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE A STRUGGLE BETWEEN INCUMBENT FOREIGN MINISTER C.D. MOLAPO AND CHIEF SEKHONYANA MASERIBANE, THE FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WHO WAS DROPPED FROM THE GOVERNMENT IN 1976 BUT WHO STILL HOLDS A SEAT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

7. KHAKETLA WAS NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE UPTURN IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN LESOTHO IN RECENT YEARS. IT WAS NOT SIGNIFICANT, HE SAID, BECAUSE "THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE." HE SAID OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WAS STRONGEST IN THE VILLAGES AND VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WERE TAKING PLACE THERE IN THE FORM OF THREATS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICERS IN THE DISTRICTS.

8. BIOGRAPHIC DATA AND OBSERVATIONS. KHAKETLA, SIXTY-FIVE, FIRST BECAME POLITICALLY ACTIVE AFTER BEING EXPELLED FROM A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING POSITION IN 1955 FOR EDITORIAL VIEWS, CHIEFLY AGAINST BRITISH RULE, WHICH APPEARED IN A NEWSPAPER HE HAD HELPED START.

HE SERVED IN VARIOUS PARTY POSTS AND IN 1961 HELPED START THE PARTY NOW KNOWN AS THE MAREMATLOU FREEDOM PARTY OF WHICH HE STILL SERVES AS SECRETARY-GENERAL. THE MFP SUPPORTS KING MOSHOESHOE II.

KHAKETLA IS NOW BEST KNOWN OUTSIDE OF LESOTHO FOR HIS BOOK "LESOTHO 1970 - AN AFRICAN COUP UNDER THE MICROSCOPE" WHICH REVIEWS THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE FIRST POST-INDEPENDENCE ELECTION WHICH WAS SUSPENDED BY THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER, CHIEF LEABUA JONATHAN. KHAKETLA WAS INCARCERATED FOR A SHORT PERIOD FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF HIS BOOK WHICH IS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER. THOUGH HIS BOOK MAY ONCE HAVE BEEN KEPT OFF THE LIBRARY AND BOOKSTORE SHELVES IN LESOTHO, IT IS NOW READILY AVAILABLE. KHAKETLA IS WORKING ON A SESOTHO LANGUAGE ECUMENICAL BIBLE UNDER SPONSORSHIP OF THE BIBLE SOCIETY. HE APPEARED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROSPEROUS AS WAS EVIDENT FROM HIS CLOTHES AND A LATE MODEL AUTOMOBILE PARKED OUTSIDE OF HIS OFFICE. HE SEEMED TO RELISH BEING GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE HIS VIEWS SOLICITED, AND PROBABLY WOULD HAVE TALKED LONGER THAN THE TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES THE PAO HAD ALLOWED HIMSELF. HE SAID HE WOULD WELCOME MORE CONTACTS WITH THE EMBASSY. HE RESPONDED THROUGHOUT THE MEETING IN A EASY MANNER, SHOWED A READINESS TO LISTEN, AND DEMONSTRATED A KEEN ABILITY TO DISCUSS ISSUES ANYWHERE ALONG THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC OR INTERNATIONAL HORIZON. APPARENTLY IN GOOD HEALTH, HE CLOSED THE TALK WITH A VIGOROUS HANDSHAKE. STOKES

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